

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for managing an inventory of at least one product of a supplier that is provided to at least one customer, wherein the at least one customer is capable of receiving and shipping out the at least one product, said method
5 comprising:

creating an open purchase order comprising an acceptable inventory range bounded by a lower limit and an upper limit for each product that the supplier provides to the at least one customer;

10 storing a supply amount of the at least one product in a storage unit that is remote from the supplier and proximate to the customer;

maintaining a product inventory count for each product representative of the amount of the product that is maintained in inventory by the at least one customer, said maintaining comprising:

15 decreasing the product inventory count as the at least one customer ships out the respective product; and

increasing the product inventory count as the at least one customer receives additional amounts of the respective product, wherein the at least one customer receives the additional amounts from the supply amount stored in the storage unit; and

20 monitoring the product inventory count at a supplier location such that the supplier is capable of detecting when product inventory counts approach the respective lower limits, wherein the product inventory count approaches the respective lower limit when the product inventory count falls below a notification level between the lower limit and the upper limit, and wherein the supplier location is
25 remote from the customer location.

2. A method according to Claim 1 further comprising providing the respective customer with an additional amount of the respective product once the supplier has detected at least one product inventory count approaching the respective
30 lower limit, wherein the additional amount is provided to the customer from the supply amount stored in the storage unit, wherein providing the additional amount occurs independent of a purchase order associated with the additional amount, and wherein the product inventory count is within the acceptable inventory range once the respective customer receives the additional amount.

3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein maintaining the product inventory count further comprises storing the product inventory count in an electronic file, and transferring the electronic file to the supplier location to facilitate monitoring the product inventory count at the supplier location, wherein monitoring the product inventory count comprises monitoring the electronic file.

4. A method according to Claim 3, wherein transferring the electronic file comprises transferring the electronic file over the World Wide Web, and wherein monitoring the product inventory count comprises monitoring a display of the product inventory count stored within the electronic file.

5. A method according to Claim 3, wherein storing the product inventory count in an electronic file comprises storing the product inventory count in an electronic file in an extensible markup language format.

6. A method according to Claim 1, wherein each product includes at least one electronic identifier, and wherein maintaining the product inventory count comprises:

reading each electronic identifier as the customer ships out the respective product and immediately thereafter decreasing the product inventory count by the number of products shipped out as identified by the electronic identifiers; and

reading each electronic identifier as the customer receives the respective product from the storage unit and immediately thereafter increasing the product inventory count by the number of products received as identified by the electronic identifiers.

7. A method according to Claim 1 further comprising providing each customer with an initial amount of each product before maintaining the product inventory count, wherein the initial amount of each product is received by the at least one customer from the storage unit.

8. A method according to Claim 7, wherein each product includes at least one electronic identifier, and wherein providing each customer with the initial amount

of each product further comprises reading each electronic identifier as the initial amount is received.

9. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the supply amount is bounded
5 by the lower limit and the upper limit.

10. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the lower limit is one below the upper limit of the acceptable inventory range, wherein the notification level equals the lower limit, and wherein the at least one customer has at least one point-of-use
10 location capable of receiving and shipping out each product.

11. A system for providing at least one product from a supplier to at least one remote customer, wherein the customer is capable of receiving and shipping out the at least one product, wherein the supplier and the at least one customer have an
15 open purchase order comprising an acceptable inventory range bounded by a lower and an upper limit for each product that the supplier provides to the at least one customer, said system comprising:

a storage unit disposed remote from the supplier and proximate to the at least one customer, wherein a supply amount of the at least one product is stored in said
20 storage unit, wherein the supplier provides the at least one product to the customer from the supply amount stored in the storage unit;

a first processing unit disposed proximate the at least one customer for maintaining a product inventory count for each product representative of the amount of the product that is maintained in inventory by the respective customer, wherein the
25 product inventory count is decreased as the customer ships out each product, and wherein the product inventory count is increased as the customer receives additional amounts of each product; and

a second processing unit disposed proximate the supplier, wherein at least one of the supplier and said second processing unit is capable of monitoring the product
30 inventory count such that at least one of the supplier and said second processing unit is capable of detecting product inventory counts that approach the respective lower limit, wherein the product inventory count approaches the respective lower limit when the product inventory count falls below a notification level between the lower limit and the upper limit.

12. A system according to Claim 11, wherein said second processing unit is further capable of sending a shipment request to the supplier when at least one of the supplier and said second processing unit has detected at least one product
5 inventory count approaching the respective lower limit, wherein when the supplier receives the shipment request the supplier is capable of providing the respective customer with an additional amount of the respective product, wherein the supplier provides the additional amount independent of a purchase order associated with the additional amount, and wherein the product inventory count is within the acceptable
10 inventory range once the additional amount is received.

13. A system according to Claim 11, wherein said first processing unit is capable of storing the product inventory count in an electronic file, wherein said first processing unit is capable of transferring the electronic file, wherein said second
15 processing unit is capable of receiving the electronic file, and wherein said second processing unit monitors the electronic file.

14. A system according to Claim 13, wherein said first processing unit is capable of transferring the electronic file over the World Wide Web, and wherein said
20 second processing monitors a display of the product inventory count stored within the electronic file.

15. A system according to Claim 13, wherein said first processing unit stores the product inventory count in an electronic file in an extensible markup
25 language format.

16. A system according to Claim 11, wherein each product includes at least one electronic identifier, wherein said first processing unit reads each electronic identifier as the customer ships out the respective product and immediately thereafter
30 decreases the product inventory count by the number of products shipped out as identified by the electronic identifiers, and wherein said first processing unit reads each electronic identifier as the customer receives the respective product and immediately thereafter increases the product inventory count by the number of products received as identified by the electronic identifiers.

17. A system according to Claim 11, wherein said first processing unit is further capable of storing a product inventory count associated with an initial amount of the at least one product before maintaining the product inventory count, wherein
5 said first processing unit stores the initial amount as the at least one customer receives the initial amount from the storage unit.

18. A system according to Claim 17, wherein each product includes at least one electronic identifier, wherein said first processing unit is capable of reading
10 each electronic identifier as the initial amount of the at least one product is received by the customer, wherein said first processing unit stores the product inventory count associated with the initial amount according to the number of products received as identified by the electronic identifiers.

19. A system according to Claim 11, wherein the supply amount is bounded by the lower limit and the upper limit.

20. A system according to Claim 11, wherein the lower limit is one below the upper limit of the acceptable inventory range, wherein the notification level equals
20 the lower limit, and wherein the supplier has a point-of-use location capable of receiving and shipping out the at least one product, and wherein the supplier provides the at least one product to the customer at the at least one point-of-use location.

21. A method for transferring at least one electronic file from a first
25 location comprising:
selecting the at least one electronic file;
transferring the at least one electronic file from the first location to a second location, wherein the second location is remote from the first location;
generating at least one pointer associated with the at least one electronic file
30 and the second location;
generating a reference electronic file at the first location and thereafter including the at least one pointer in the reference electronic file, wherein the reference electronic file is capable of being displayed; and

displaying the reference electronic file including the at least one pointer at a display location such that a user located at the display location is capable of locating the at least one electronic file at the second location based upon the at least one pointer.

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22. A method according to Claim 21, wherein including the at least one pointer in the reference electronic file comprises including the at least one pointer for a predefined period of time.

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23. A method according to Claim 21, wherein transferring the at least one electronic file comprises transferring the at least one electronic file according to a protocol selected from a group consisting of a file transfer protocol (FTP), a hyper-text transfer protocol (HTTP), and a secured HTTP (HTTPS).

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24. A method according to Claim 21, wherein generating the reference electronic file comprises generating the reference electronic file in a hypertext markup language including at least one hypertext link associated with the at least one pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one electronic file at the second location.

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25. A method according to Claim 21, wherein generating the reference electronic file comprises generating the reference electronic file in a extensible markup language including at least one interactive link associated with the at least one pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one electronic file at the second location.

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26. A system for transferring at least one electronic file, said system comprising:

a first processing unit, wherein the at least one electronic file is stored in said first processing unit, wherein said first processing unit is capable of transferring the at least one electronic file to a remote location, wherein said first processing unit is capable of generating at least one pointer associated with the at least one electronic file and the remote location, wherein said first processing unit is capable of generating a reference electronic file and thereafter including the at least one pointer in the

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reference electronic file, wherein the reference electronic file is capable of being displayed; and

a second processing unit disposed remote said first processing unit, wherein said second processing unit is capable of displaying the reference electronic file including the at least one pointer such that a user is capable of at least one of locating and accessing the at least one electronic file at the remote location based upon the at least one pointer.

27. A system according to Claim 26, wherein said second processing unit is capable of including the at least one pointer in the reference electronic file for a predefined period of time.

28. A system according to Claim 26, wherein said first processing unit is capable of transferring the at least one electronic file using a file transfer protocol.

29. A system according to Claim 26, wherein said first processing unit is capable of generating the reference electronic file in a hypertext markup language including at least one hypertext link associated with the at least one pointer.

30. A system according to Claim 26, wherein said first processing unit is capable of generating the reference electronic file in an extensible markup language including at least one interactive link associated with the at least one pointer.

31. A computer program product for transferring at least one electronic file, the computer program product comprising a computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code embodied in said medium, the computer-readable program code comprising:

- a first executable portion for selecting the at least one electronic file stored within the processing unit;
- a second executable portion for transferring the at least one electronic file to a remote location;
- a third executable portion for generating at least one pointer associated with the at least one electronic file and the remote location; and

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a forth executable portion for generating a reference electronic file including
the at least one pointer, wherein the reference electronic file is capable of being
displayed at a remote display location, wherein the electronic file is capable of being
displayed such that a user is capable of at least one of locating and accessing the at
5 least one electronic file at the remote location based upon the at least one pointer.

32. A computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein said
forth executable portion generates the reference electronic file including the at least
one pointer such that the reference electronic file is capable of being displayed for a
10 predefined period of time.

33. A computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein said
second executable portion is capable of transferring the at least one electronic file
using a file transfer protocol.
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34. A computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein said
forth executable portion generates the reference electronic file in a hypertext markup
language including at least one hypertext link associated with the at least one pointer.

20 35. A computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein said
forth executable portion generates the reference electronic file in an extensible
markup language including at least one interactive link associated with the at least one
pointer.

25 36. A method for creating at least one composite electronic file including
at least one component electronic file, the method comprising:

providing the at least one component electronic file disposed in at least one
composite location; and

30 accessing the at least one composite location and thereafter automatically
generating the respective composite electronic file including at least one component
pointer associated with the at least one component electronic file in the respective
composite location.

37. A method according to Claim 36 further comprising providing a master electronic file before providing the at least one component electronic file, wherein the master electronic file comprises at least one composite pointer associated with the at least one composite location, wherein accessing the at least one composite location
5 comprises accessing the at least one composite location via the at least one composite pointer of the master electronic file.

38. A method according to Claim 36, wherein providing the at least one component electronic file comprises transferring the at least one component electronic
10 file into the at least one composite location.

39. A method according to Claim 36, wherein generating the composite electronic file comprises generating the composite electronic file in a hypertext markup language including at least one hypertext link associated with the at least one
15 component pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one component electronic file.

40. A method according to Claim 36, wherein generating the composite electronic file comprises generating the composite electronic file in an extensible
20 markup language including at least one interactive link associated with the at least one pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one component electronic file.

41. A method according to Claim 36, wherein when the at least one
25 component file is removed from the at least one composite location the respective composite electronic file is generated independent of the respective component pointer associated with the respective component electronic file.

42. A system for generating at least one composite electronic file
30 comprising:
a first processing unit comprising at least one composite location capable of storing at least one component electronic file; and
a second processing unit capable of accessing the at least one composite location, wherein said first processing unit is capable of automatically generating the

at least one composite electronic file when the respective composite location is accessed, wherein the at least one composite electronic file includes at least one component pointer that is associated with the at least one component electronic file in the respective composite location, and wherein said second processing unit is capable of displaying the composite electronic file on a graphical user interface (GUI) such that a user is capable of accessing the at least one component electronic file via the GUI based upon the at least one component pointer.

43. A system according to Claim 42, wherein said first processing unit is further capable of receiving the at least one component electronic file, and wherein said first processing unit receives the at least one component electronic file into the at least one composite location.

44. A system according to Claim 42, wherein said first processing unit is capable of generating the composite electronic file in a hypertext markup language including at least one hypertext link associated with the at least one component pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one component electronic file.

45. A system according to Claim 42, wherein said first processing unit is capable of generating the composite electronic file in an extensible markup language including at least one interactive link associated with the at least one component pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one component electronic file.

46. A system according to Claim 42, wherein said first processing unit further comprises a master electronic file, wherein the master electronic file comprises at least one composite pointer associated with the at least one composite location, wherein said second processing unit is capable of accessing the at least one composite location based on the at least one composite pointer.

47. A system according to Claim 46, wherein the master electronic file is in a hypertext markup language format including at least one hypertext link associated

with the at least one composite pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one composite location.

48. A system according to Claim 46, wherein the master electronic file is
5 in an extensible markup language format including at least one interactive link associated with the at least one composite pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one composite location.

49. A system according to Claim 42, wherein when the at least one
10 component electronic file is removed from the at least one composite location said first processing unit generates the respective composite electronic file independent of the respective component pointer associated with the respective component electronic file.

50. A system according to Claim 42, further comprising a remote
15 processing unit, wherein said remote processing unit comprises at least one composite location capable of storing the at least one component electronic file.

51. A system according to Claim 50, wherein said remote processing unit
20 is further capable of receiving the at least one component electronic file, and wherein said remote processing unit receives the at least one component electronic file into the at least one composite location.

52. A computer program product for generating at least one composite
25 electronic file, the computer program product comprising a computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code embodied in said medium, the computer-readable program code comprising:

a first executable portion for storing at least one component electronic file in
least one composite location;

30 a second executable portion for accessing the at least one composite location;

a third executable portion for automatically generating the at least one
composite electronic file once the at least one composite location is accessed, wherein
the at least one composite electronic file includes at least one component pointer

associated with the at least one component electronic file in the at least one composite location; and

5 a fourth executable portion for formatting the composite electronic file such that the composite electronic file including the at least one component pointer is capable of being displayed on a graphical user interface (GUI), wherein the at least one component electronic file is accessible via the GUI based upon the respective component pointer.

10 53. A computer program product according to Claim 52, wherein said forth executable portion formats the composite electronic file in a hypertext markup language including at least one hypertext link associated with the at least one component pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one component electronic file.

15 54. A computer program product according to Claim 52, wherein said fourth executable portion formats the composite electronic file in an extensible markup language including at least one interactive link associated with the at least one component pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one modified component electronic file.

20 55. A computer program product according to Claim 52 further comprising a fifth executable portion for storing a master electronic file, wherein the master electronic file includes at least one composite pointer associated with the at least one composite location, wherein the master electronic file is capable of being displayed on the GUI, and wherein the at least one composite location is accessible via the GUI
25 based upon the respective composite pointer.

30 56. A computer program product according to Claim 55, wherein the master electronic file is in a hypertext markup language format including at least one hypertext link associated with the at least one composite pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one composite location.

57. A computer program product according to Claim 55, wherein the master electronic file is in an extensible markup language format including at least

one interactive link associated with the at least one composite pointer such that the user is capable of locating and accessing the at least one composite location.

- 5 58. A computer program product according to Claim 52, wherein when the at least one component electronic file is removed from the composite location said third executable portion generates the respective composite electronic file independent of the respective component pointer.

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